

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A welding wire package comprising a drum or box with a central axis, multiple layers of looped welding wire defining a stack of wire to be paid out, said stack having an upper ring shaped surface with an outer cylindrical surface and an inner cylindrical surface defining a central bore concentric with said central axis and a flexible permanent magnet retainer ring on top of said upper ring shaped surface, said retainer ring having an inner periphery edge defining a wire removing opening and allowing welding wire to be paid from under the said retainer ring upwardly from said central bore through said opening such that the welding wire engages said inner edge at a circumferential location, said flexible magnetic ring being resilient such that the welding wire flexes upwardly said retainer ring including said inner edge at said circumferential location as the welding wire is paid out.

2. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 1 wherein said flexible magnet ring has a thickness in the general range of 0.10-0.01 inches.

3. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 2 wherein said flexible magnet ring has a magnetic strength of less than 1.0 Megagauss Oersteds.

4. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 1 wherein said flexible magnet ring has a magnetic strength of less than 1.0 Megagauss Oersteds.

5. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 4 wherein said flexible magnet ring is a generally annular ring body formed by a substantially uniform magnetic composition that extends between said inner periphery edge and an outer peripheral edge that is opposite to inner periphery edge~~with an inner generally circular~~

edge having a diameter greater than the diameter of said inner cylindrical surface of said wire stack.

6. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 3 wherein said flexible magnet ring is a generally annular ring body formed by a substantially uniform magnetic composition that extends between said inner periphery edge and an outer peripheral edge that is opposite to inner periphery edge ~~with an inner generally circular edge having a diameter greater than the diameter of said inner cylindrical surface of said wire stack.~~

7. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 2 wherein said flexible magnet ring is a generally annular ring body formed by a substantially uniform magnetic composition that extends between said inner periphery edge and an outer peripheral edge that is opposite to inner periphery edge ~~with an inner generally circular edge having a diameter greater than the diameter of said inner cylindrical surface of said wire stack.~~

8. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 1 wherein said flexible magnet ring is a generally annular ring body formed by a substantially uniform magnetic composition that extends between said inner periphery edge and an outer peripheral edge that is opposite to inner periphery edge ~~with an inner generally circular edge having a diameter greater than the diameter of said inner cylindrical surface of said wire stack.~~

9. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 8 wherein said ring body extends between a bottom surface that engages said upper ring shaped surface of said wire stack and an upper surface opposite to said bottom surface, said bottom and top surfaces extending between said inner and outer edges, substantially uniform magnetic composition extending between said bottom and top surfaces ~~including a cylindrical core in said bore of said welding wire stack.~~

10. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 4-7 wherein said ring body extends between a bottom surface that engages said upper ring shaped surface of said wire stack and an upper surface opposite to said bottom surface, said bottom and top surfaces extending between said inner and outer edges, said substantially uniform magnetic composition extending between said bottom and top surfaces including a cylindrical core in said bore of said welding wire stack.

11. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 2-6 wherein said ring body extends between a bottom surface that engages said upper ring shaped surface of said wire stack and an upper surface opposite to said bottom surface, said bottom and top surfaces extending between said inner and outer edges, said substantially uniform magnetic composition extending between said bottom and top surfaces including a cylindrical core in said bore of said welding wire stack.

12. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 4-5 wherein said ring body extends between a bottom surface that engages said upper ring shaped surface of said wire stack and an upper surface opposite to said bottom surface, said bottom and top surfaces extending between said inner and outer edges, said substantially uniform magnetic composition extending between said bottom and top surfaces including a cylindrical core in said bore of said welding wire stack.

13. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 12 wherein said package further includes a side wall supporting the outer cylindrical surface of the wire stack, flexible magnet ring has an said outer periphery of said ring body generally matching said side wall outer cylindrical surface of said wire stack.

14. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 13 wherein said outer periphery is generally circular.

15. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 8 wherein said package further includes a side wall supporting the outer cylindrical surface of the wire

~~stack, flexible magnet ring has an~~ said outer periphery of said ring body generally matching said side wall ~~outer cylindrical surface of said wire stack.~~

16. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 15 wherein said outer periphery is generally circular.

17. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 4 wherein said package further includes a side wall supporting the outer cylindrical surface of the wire stack, said flexible magnet ring ~~has an~~ having an outer periphery generally matching said side wall ~~outer cylindrical surface of said wire stack.~~

18. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 17 wherein said outer periphery is generally circular.

19. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 2 wherein said package further includes a side wall supporting the outer cylindrical surface of the wire stack, said flexible magnet ring ~~has an~~ having an outer periphery generally matching said side wall ~~outer cylindrical surface of said wire stack.~~

20. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 19 wherein said outer periphery is generally circular.

21. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 1 wherein said package further includes a side wall supporting the outer cylindrical surface of the wire stack, said flexible magnet ring ~~has an~~ having an outer periphery generally matching said side wall ~~outer cylindrical surface of said wire stack.~~

22. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 21 wherein said outer periphery is generally circular.

23. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 45 wherein said uniform magnetic composition ~~flexible magnet ring~~ includes ferrite particles in a flexible non-magnetic binder.

24. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim ~~3~~6 wherein said uniform magnetic composition ~~flexible magnet ring~~ includes ferrite particles in a flexible non-magnetic binder.

25. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim ~~2~~7 wherein said uniform magnetic composition ~~flexible magnet ring~~ includes ferrite particles in a flexible non-magnetic binder.

26. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim ~~4~~8 wherein said uniform magnetic composition ~~flexible magnet ring~~ includes ferrite particles in a flexible non-magnetic binder.

27. (Currently amended) A retainer ring for use in a ~~package~~ drum of looped welding wire ~~wire~~, said ring being a flat sheet of flexible permanent magnet material with an outer periphery edge and an inner periphery edge, said outer ~~edge~~ periphery having a diameter large enough to substantially cover the looped welding wire, said retainer ring being resilient such that the welding wire engaging said inner edge during the unwinding of the wire from the package flexes said inner edge of said ring upwardly.

28. (Original) A retainer ring as defined in claim 27 wherein said ring has a thickness in the general range of 0.10-0.01 inches.

29. (Original) A retainer ring as defined in claim 27 wherein said ring has a magnetic strength of less than 1.0 Megagauss Oersteds.

30. (Original) A retainer ring as defined in claim 27 wherein said ring includes ferrite particles in a flexible non-magnetic binder.

31. (Currently amended) A retainer ring for use in a ~~drum~~ package of looped welding wire, said ring being a flat sheet of permanent magnet material having a substantially uniform magnetic composition extending between ~~with~~ an outer periphery edge and an inner periphery edge said outer periphery having a diameter large enough to substantially cover the looped welding wire, said inner edge defining an inner opening

having a diameter sized to allow the welding wire to pass through said opening during the unwinding of the wire from said package and said ring controlling the unwinding of the welding wire based substantially on the magnetic properties of said ring.

32. (Original) A retainer ring as defined in claim 31 wherein said ring has a thickness in the general range of 0.10-0.01 inches.

33. (Original) A retainer ring as defined in claim 31 wherein said ring has a magnetic strength of less than 1.0 Megagauss Oersteds.

34. (Original) A retainer ring as defined in claim 31 wherein said ring is flexible and includes ferrite particles in a flexible non-magnetic binder.

35. (Currently amended) A method of controlling the payout of a welding wire in a package at a welding operation, said package comprising a stack of multiple layers of looped welding wire having an annular top and an oppositely facing bottom, said method including:

(a) applying a flexible magnetic retainer ring on the top of the wire stack such that said ring applies a magnetic field to the top of said stack, said ring being formed by ferrite particles in a flexible non-magnetic binder such that said ring is deformable by the welding wire; and,

(b) pulling said wire from said stack for feeding to said welding operation such that said welding wire flexes a portion of said ring upwardly as the welding wire is paid out while a remaining portion of said ring remains adjacent to said top of said stack.

36. (Currently amended) A method as defined in claim 35 wherein said retainer ring has in inner peripheral edge and an outer peripheral edge wherein said is a flexible permanent magnet retainer ring made from ferrite particles in a and said non-magnetic binder extend between said inner and outer edges.

37. (Original) A method as defined in claim 35 wherein said applying act is accomplished by an electromagnet.

38. (Currently amended) A welding wire package comprising a drum or box with a central axis, multiple layers of looped welding wire defining a stack wire to be paid out, said stack having an upper ring shaped surface with an outer cylindrical surface and an inner cylindrical surface defining a central bore concentric with said central axis and a retainer ring having a ~~substantially flexible~~ bendable retainer ring body on top of said upper ring shaped surface that can conform to the upper ring shaped surface, said retainer ring allowing welding wire to be paid from under the ring upwardly from said stack and being deflectable such that the welding wire flexes a portion of said retainer ring as the welding wire is paid out from said stack while the remaining portion of said ring remains adjacent to said upper ring shaped surface.

39. (Previously presented) A welding wire package as defined in claim 38 wherein said flexible ring body has a thickness in the general range of 0.10-0.01 inches and is a polymer.

40. (Currently amended) A welding wire package comprising a drum or box with a central axis, multiple layers of looped welding wire defining a stack wire to be paid out, said stack having an upper ring shaped surface with an outer cylindrical surface and an inner cylindrical surface defining a central bore concentric with said central axis and a flexible resilient retainer ring on top of said upper ring shaped surface, said retainer ring being configured to allowing the welding wire to be paid from under the ring upwardly from said stack such that said ring conforms to changing contour of said upper ring shaped surface and deflects upwardly only where said ring is engaged by the exiting wire as said wire is paid out, said ~~flexible resilient~~ ring ~~has a thickness in the general range of 0.10-0.01 inches and is a polymer, and said flexible ring is being~~ a permanent magnet sheet.

41. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 38 wherein said flexible ring body has a thickness in the general range of 0.10-0.01 inches and includes a rubber binder.

42. (Currently amended) A welding wire package comprising a drum or box with a central axis, multiple layers of looped welding wire defining a stack wire to be paid out, said stack having an upper ring shaped surface with an outer cylindrical surface and an inner cylindrical surface defining a central bore concentric with said central axis and a flexible deformable magnetic retainer ring on top of said upper ring shaped surface, said retainer ring having an inner peripheral edge defining an inner opening and an outer peripheral edge opposite to said inner peripheral edge, said retainer ring allowing welding wire to be paid from under the ring upwardly from said stack and through said inner opening, said ~~flexible-deformable~~ ring has a thickness in the general range of 0.10-0.01 inches and is rubber, and said ~~flexible-ring~~ being deformable by said welding wire as said welding wire is paid out of said package, said retainer ring being is a permanent magnet sheet comprised of ferrite particles in a non-magnetic binder.